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SUBJECT: TURKISH MEDIA REACTION  
THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 2010

#### Media Highlights

US Embassy Ankara - Turkey Media Reaction - February 18, 2010 as prepared by the Public Affairs Information Office

#### How the US is Playing

Turkey Urges Softer Tone as Time Ticks Away for Iran (Hurriyet Daily News)

In a 2/18 late morning press availability, FM Davutoglu told reporters that an expected Obama-Erdogan telephone was eminent to discuss the outcome of Turkish diplomacy with Iran. Additionally, Davutoglu said he had discussed his trip with Secretary Clinton late on 2/17 and confirmed that Turkey had made several proposals to Iran "some on the spot, others with the knowledge of the West." Tabloid Aksam reports that FM Davutoglu will brief US Undersecretary William Burns on his 2/16 visit to Tehran, focusing on how Iran responded to Turkey's "new" proposals on uranium exchange. Media report that Ankara offered to host the exchange of Iran's low-enriched uranium, with the 20-percent enriched uranium to be supplied by world powers as part of an IAEA deal. Asked how Iran responded to the proposal, a Turkish diplomat in Hurriyet said "We are trying to avoid escalating tensions but the Iranians are inscrutable and there is no single Iran in front of us." Davutoglu held key discussions with four top Iranian officials, including President Ahmadinejad, FM Mottaki, Parliament Speaker Larijani and Chief Nuclear Negotiator Jalili. Press reports claim that the talks began at 9 a.m. Tuesday and lasted past midnight.

Secretary Clinton Says No Military Action Against Iran on al-Arabiya (CNN-Turk)

In "Is There an Operation Against Iran?" CNN-Turk reports that Secretary Clinton clearly delineated between military action and sanctions against Iran during a 2/17 interview on al-Arabiya TV. The story quotes Secretary Clinton as saying "We don't want Iran to become a nuclear weapons power, but we are not planning anything other than sanctions. We want to try to get the strongest sanctions we can at the UN Security Council, mostly to influence Tehran's decision-making." Meanwhile, the same report adds "Admiral Mike Mullen, the chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, said that the US keeps all options on the table against Iran which includes

potential military options." In "Reality About Iran Crisis" columnist Kadri Gursel of mainstream Milliyet observes that there's been a "wrong approach by the Turkish government in Iran from the very beginning: "Diplomatic efforts on the Iran nuclear crisis require impartiality, the rulers of Turkey, however, implied their pro-Iranian stance from the very first step. Given the current situation, there is a heavy toll to pay for Turkey even if we now pretend to being neutral." The writer thinks that the government acted against the established thinking: "AKP pursued a marginal policy and presented the nuke crisis like a tiff between Israel and Iran. Instead Turkey should have been exerting efforts to break Iranian stubbornness and explain the awaiting consequences."

Sinirlioglu Visit: Ankara-Washington Diplomacy Gains Momentum  
(Today's Zaman)

Islamist-oriented Today's Zaman reports that FM Undersecretary Sinilioglu discussed a wide range of topics during his Washington visit this week in talks with State Department and National Security Council officials. Zaman underlines the close timing of the visit to a new hearing on AGR planned in the House of Representatives, and reports that diplomatic sources emphasized that "the rhythm of Turkish-American relations should always be kept lively via senior-level technical and diplomatic visits." Zaman also previews U/S William Burns arrival in Ankara for "Shared Vision" discussion with Turkish officials.

US Seeks New Page with Syria (Cumhuriyet)

In "President Obama Makes Double Move on Syria," Islamist-oriented Zaman reports the US President has nominated Robert Stephen Ford as ambassador to Syria and sent Undersecretary of State for Political

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Affairs William Burns to Damascus, where Burns met with President Assad yesterday. Zaman says these moves "signal a new era between the US and Syria." Leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet says "The US Seeks a New Page with Syria." Media reports that Burns, "the No: 3 at the State Department," will visit Ankara on Thursday to discuss Iran, Turkey-Armenia normalization, and the AGR.

In the Headlines

"Judiciary Earthquake" Rocks Turkey (CNN-Turk)

All papers and TV channels cover the crisis that's erupted between the government and the constitutional judiciary bodies. Mainstream Hurriyet headline reads "21.15 Quake" and says the arrest of Erzincan's chief prosecutor Ilhan Cihaner caused a tremor in judiciary. Sabah headlines "Double Threat," and notes that following the arrest, the Supreme Board of Judges and Prosecutors (HSYK) stripped four prosecutors in Erzurum, who ordered the arrest of Cihaner, of their authority. Hurriyet reports that, as a result, Justice Minister Ergin, following consultations with PM Erdogan, announced at a press conference that the "HSYK's reaction is a clear usurpation of authority, an unjust behavior, an intervention in independence of judiciary." Mainstream Milliyet headlines "State Crisis," and reports that while the HSYK was discussing the issue, the Supreme Court of Appeals unanimously decided that HSYK's ruling was right and would follow the decision's proper implementation. Liberal Radikal and pro-government Haberturk both note that "closure case" Chief Prosecutor Yalcinkaya announced he would investigate allegations regarding "agreements" made with the Kurdish DTP party for the recent return of PKK members at Turkey's Habur border gate, as well as the latest developments in Erzurum and Erzincan, was associated by the recent rumors in Ankara on a new (AKP) closure case. Islamist-oriented Yeni Safak headlines "HSYK's Blow on Justice" and says HSYK's stroke on the judicial power raised tension in Ankara. Media note that Justice Minister Ergin said that "the support for the HSYK decision by the Supreme Court of Appeals and the Council of State are unacceptable."

Commentary: Prosecutorial Debates

Pundits varied in their opinions based on the papers they write for.

Writers in pro-government papers mostly express concern over "judicial board intervening in the process." Zaman's Huseyin Gulerce makes a link to Italian Gladio: "When the Gladio investigation was started, the biggest resistance came from the judiciary." Nazli Ilicak of Sabah similarly says "High board of

judiciary is blocking an ongoing process." Writers in mainstream press however do not quite agree with this argument. Oktay Eksi in mainstream Hurriyet considers "a bold violation of law through government's effort" while Gungor Mengi in mainstream Vatan warns: "The government is constantly giving an image of manipulating constitutional institutions and standing against them." The writer foresees a "deepening system crisis" in the end. Murat Yetkin in liberal Radikal underlines Justice Minister's representative unexpectedly attended the High Board of Judiciary voting and implies that it was a deliberate effort to mount tension: "If the tension continues mounting and if leads to a closure case against AKP, the government is prepared for calling an early election and believes that all of this will help for garnering more votes."

Afghanistan: Two-Thirds of Marjah under Control (Zaman)  
Leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet reports US military officials claim while their troops advanced, the Taliban used civilians as "human shields" and evacuated several villages in the region. Islamist-oriented Zaman reports two-thirds of Marjah, "a logistical center for the Taliban," has been taken under control. Mainstream Hurriyet website, reporting on the Marjah operation from international wire dispatches, comments "The fight in southern Afghanistan between insurgents and NATO troops, along with Afghan forces still learning on the job, is not a conventional war. The Taliban shoot, drop their weapons and run off. They plant roadside bombs and disappear." Papers also report Pakistan has confirmed that Mullah Abdulgani al-Baradar, "the Taliban's No: 2," was

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arrested in Karachi last week.

BDP Chairman Demirtas Proposes Home Arrest for Ocalan  
Leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet and mainstream Sabah report that Chairman of BDP Selahattin Demirtas, made a call on Turkish authorities to transfer the jailed PKK leader Ocalan to a home prison from where he stays now the Imrali prison.

Passenger Train Service Between Iraq and Turkey Begins  
Mainstreams Sabah and Vatan report that the historical railway connecting Turkey to Iraq over Syria re-opened after a period of two decades. The first passenger train from Mosul arrived in Gaziantep yesterday and welcomed by the Gaziantep residents at the station with a ceremony. Vatan notes that the trip, including the passport control, etc., takes about 18 hours.

RTUK to Allow Kurdish Broadcasts (Vatan)  
Mainstream Vatan reports Turkey's radio and television watchdog RTUK is expected to permit 14 radio and TV channels from east and southeast Turkey to start "24-hour Kurdish-language broadcasts."

TV Spotlight (CNN Turk)

The chief prosecutor has decided to probe speculations regarding "judicial irregularities" during the return of the PKK members in Habur and Erzurum.

Two navy admirals interrogated in connection with the alleged criminal network 'Ergenekon' have testified to the prosecutor.

The Turkish Parliament has approved a bill for the establishment of the "Undersecretariat for Public Order and Security."

The "Tekel" workers have ended their hunger strike in Ankara.

On March 7, Prime Minister Erdogan will go to Saudi Arabia to receive the "Service to Islam" award by the King Faisal Foundation.

Brewer Efes Turkey said that over the last four years, 17,000 shops selling alcohol were closed due to "neighborhood pressures."

Turkish Central Bank Governor Durmus Yilmaz says an increase in Turkey's international credit rating would not be a surprise.

An opinion poll shows that 57 percent of the French prefer former PM Dominique de Villepin while 38 percent opt for President Sarkozy as

the head of state.  
JEFFREY